

Supporting Statement

LIST SAMPLING FRAME SURVEY

OMB No. 0535-0140

This docket is being submitted for an extension of 3 years. There has been a procedural change in that the surveys are primarily conducted at the national level using the National Processing Center (NPC) for data collection activities.

Included in the attachments are three sample questionnaires that NASS will be using. The *Agricultural Identification Survey* is used to identify new operators that need to be added to our list frame. If anyone who completes this questionnaire identifies that they produce specialty crops they may receive a follow up interview, the *List Sampling Farm Criteria*. We have included an example of the North Dakota version of the *List Sampling Farm Criteria* along with a copy of the master listing of the items that could appear in this questionnaire. Each Field Office will customize their criteria questionnaire to contain the commodities of interest for them. Rather than include a different version of each questionnaire we included a master listing to show the full range of questions that could be asked. This master questionnaire version should help reduce the review and approval process for this docket.

The two step survey process was developed to help reduce respondent burden. Since most US farmers do not produce specialty crops, we removed these commodities from the *Agricultural Identification Survey* and limited them to the *List Sampling Farm Criteria* questionnaire.

A. JUSTIFICATION

- 1. Explain the circumstances that make the collection of information necessary. Identify any legal or administrative requirements that necessitate the collection. Attach a copy of the appropriate section of each statute and regulation mandating or authorizing the collection of information.**

The primary objective of the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) is to provide data users with timely and reliable agricultural production and economic statistics, as well as environmental and specialty agricultural related statistics. To accomplish this objective, NASS relies heavily on the use of sample surveys statistically drawn from the "list sampling frame." The list sampling frame is a database of names and addresses with control data that contains the component values from which these samples can be drawn.

A broad, yet current, representation of all components of the agricultural sector (small and large farms as well as agribusinesses and specialty farms) is essential in providing accurate statistics for these acreage, production, economic, and environmental surveys. Representation of both small and large farms is also needed to ensure reliable indications for county estimates and to provide a foundation for the Census of Agriculture.

In 1976, Congress appropriated funds for NASS to construct and maintain a list sampling frame. A list sampling frame system has been developed that includes computer record linkage, automated duplication removal, frame classification, sample selection, mailing, and maintenance. The system is currently operational in all States. Details of our list frame data can be found in our Systems of Records Notice (SORN) published in the Federal Register.

General authority for these data collection activities is granted under U.S. Code Title 7, Section 2204 which specifies that "The Secretary of Agriculture shall procure and preserve all information concerning agriculture which he can obtain . . . by the collection of statistics . . ."

2. Indicate how, by whom, and for what purpose the information is to be used. Except for a new collection, indicate the actual use the agency has made of the information received from the current collection.

Data from criteria surveys are used to provide control data for new records on the list sampling frame this information is utilized to define the size of operation, define sample populations and establish eligibility for the Census of Agriculture. Occasionally records already on the list sampling frame with old or missing control data will also be included in a criteria survey.

New names and addresses of potential farms are obtained on a regular basis from growers associations, other government agencies and various outside sources. Information from these new list sources are processed through and reviewed through a record linkage system to obtain new potential farm records. The "new add" records are then surveyed for criteria items which will later be used to classify the records according to specific crop acreage, livestock inventory, and/or land in farm. This information is used to develop efficient sample designs, which allows NASS the ability to draw reduced sample sizes from the originally large universe populations.

All types of Farms and Ranches are represented on the list sampling frame. For efficient samples with desired precision of estimation, control data must be kept current and complete. Records with old or missing control data are also included in criteria surveys to keep control data current. Old or missing control data can lead to incorrect inclusion in or exclusion from samples and to inefficient

stratification. Also, another important function of up to date quality control data are for non-response weighting during the Census or Survey process.

- 3. Describe whether, and to what extent, the collection of information involves the use of automated, electronic, mechanical, or other technological collection techniques or other forms of information technology, e.g., permitting electronic submission of responses, and the basis for the decision for adopting this means of collection. Also describe any consideration of using information technology to reduce burden.**

Both of the criteria questionnaires (List Sampling Farm Criteria (LSFC) and the National Criteria Survey (NCS)) have not been available on the internet in the past, but NASS is working to develop a Web-based application for each questionnaire in the near future. Since the majority of the data is collected using self-administered questionnaires, i.e., questionnaires sent to the respondent by mail we felt that these would both be good surveys to be offered with an internet application.

Most data are collected on the NCS questionnaire which is a shorter standardized questionnaire that uses the same version in all States. The LSFC is a customized questionnaire that allows States the flexibility to be more specific in selecting commodities that are of interest for their State. This flexibility is important when working with new add records from a specialty commodity list source or unique demographic.

- 4. Describe efforts to identify duplication. Show specifically why any similar information already available cannot be used or modified for use for the purposes described in Item 2 above.**

The National Agricultural Statistics Service cooperates with State departments of agriculture, land grant universities, and other State and Federal agencies to conduct agricultural surveys. Surveys meet both State and Federal needs, thus eliminating duplication and minimizing reporting burden on the agricultural industry.

With numerous people entering and leaving the farming industry each year it is crucial that NASS maintains a current list of farm operators to sample from. On each of our surveys that employ a stratified sample, NASS must have an accurate and up to date listing of farmers in order to calculate an accurate expansion or weighing of data to compensate for non-respondents.

- 5. If the collection of information impacts small businesses or other small entities (Item 5 of OMB Form 83-I), describe any methods used to minimize burden.**

The USDA defines a “Farm” as any individual or operation that produces and sells \$1,000 of agricultural products a year, or has the potential to sell \$1,000 per year.

Most of the respondents to the NCS or LSFC are relatively small agricultural establishments. In fact, 77 percent of the respondents to the 2004 – 2007 National Criteria Surveys reported sales of less than \$10,000.

Burden is minimized by using the shorter NCS to collect information for most new potential agricultural establishments. Only information needed to classify an establishment for the basic survey and census of agriculture purposes are collected. Occasionally, if the establishment reports production of specialty commodities or is relatively large in size the longer LSFC may be used for further follow-up. Although in general, the longer LSFC is used for names from specialty commodity list sources which require more specific data.

6. Describe the consequence to Federal program or policy activities if the collection is not conducted or is conducted less frequently, as well as any technical or legal obstacles to reducing burden.

Generally, the better the relationship between the data used for sample design and the survey data collected, the smaller the sample size necessary to produce reliable estimates. For efficient samples with desired precision of estimation, control data must be kept current and complete. When developing sample designs, the most important information is (1) the presence or absence of a data item, (2) indication of the age of the data item, followed by (3) some measure of size. This control data determines the usefulness and efficiency of the list as a sampling frame. NASS conducts criteria surveys at least annually to maintain a current list sampling that is as complete as possible

7. Explain any special circumstances that would cause an information collection to be conducted in a manner inconsistent with the general information guidelines in 5 CFR 1320.5.

There are no special circumstances associated with this information collection.

8. Provide a copy and identify the date and page number of publication in the Federal Register of the agency's notice, required by 5 CFR 1320.8 (d), soliciting comments on the information collection prior to submission to OMB. Summarize public comments received in response to that notice and describe actions taken by the agency in response to these comments.

The Notice soliciting comments was published in the Federal Register on March 26, 2009 on page 13176 and two public comments were received.

Describe efforts to consult with persons outside the agency to obtain their views on the availability of data, frequency of collection, the clarity of instructions and record-keeping, disclosure, or reporting format (if any), and on the data elements to be recorded, disclosed, or reported.

Current initiatives related to agricultural resources management and chemical uses (OMB No. 0535-0218) have resulted in NASS working with the Environmental Protection Agency, the U.S. Geological Survey, and the Economic Research Service in USDA to improve coverage of the NASS list frame. Also, with the increased interest in organic farming, water usage (irrigation), on farm energy production, and crops being produced for use in bio-energy, NASS has been working with outside sources (other government agencies and member associations) to improve our list of known farmers.

9. Explain any decision to provide any payment or gift to respondents.

There are no payments or gifts to respondents.

10. Describe any assurance of confidentiality provided to respondents and the basis for the assurance in statute, regulation, or agency policy.

All questionnaires include a statement that individual reports are kept confidential. U.S. Code Title 18, Section 1905, U.S. Code Title 7, Section 2276, and Subtitle A of the Confidential Information Protection and Statistical Efficiency Act of 2002 (CIPSEA), (Public Law 107-347) provide for the confidentiality of reported information. All employees of NASS and all enumerators hired and supervised under a cooperative agreement with the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA) must read the regulations and sign a statement of compliance.

NASS and NASS contractors comply with OMB Implementation Guidance, (Implementation Guidance for Title V of the E-Government Act, CIPSEA). CIPSEA supports NASS' pledge of confidentiality to all respondents and facilitates the agency's efforts to reduce burden by supporting statistical activities of collaborative agencies through designation of NASS agents; subject to the limitations and penalties described in CIPSEA.

11. Provide additional justification for any questions of a sensitive nature.

There are no questions of a sensitive nature.

- 12. Provide estimates of the hour burden of the collection of information. The statement should indicate the number of respondents, frequency of response, annual hour burden, and an explanation of how the burden was estimated. If this request for approval covers more than one form, provide separate hour burden estimates for each form and aggregate the hour burdens in Item 13 of OMB Form 83-I. Provide estimates of annualized cost to respondents for the hour burdens for collections of information, identifying and using appropriate wage rate categories.**

The Field Office in each State determines what combination of questions to ask on the LSFC, based on the types of agriculture in their particular State. The questions asked on the NCS are determined by NASS HQ, since we only use one questionnaire version for the entire US. Both questionnaires are generally short, asking the minimum amount of information. Total hours of burden are based on the calculations below.

Reporting time of 96,800 hours is multiplied by \$24 per hour for a total cost to the public of \$ 2,323,200.

Projected 2009 - 2012 Annual Response Burden Hours for List Frame Surveys												
List Frame Surveys	Sample Size	Freq.	Response				Non-response				Total Burden Hours	
			Count	Freq. x Count	Min/ Resp.	Burden Hours	Count	Freq. x Count	Min./ Non Resp	Burden Hours		
List Frame Criteria Surveys												
First Mailing	100,000	1.00	30,000	30,000	15	7,500	70,000	70,000	2	2,333	9,833	
Second Mailing	70,000	1.00	21,000	21,000	15	5,250	49,000	49,000	2	1,633	6,883	
Phone Follow Up	49,000	1.00	29,400	29,400	15	7,350	19,600	19,600	2	653	8,003	
National Criteria Survey												
First Mailing	400,000	1.00	120,000	120,000	10	20,000	280,000	280,000	2	9,333	29,333	
Second Mailing	280,000	1.00	84,000	84,000	10	14,000	196,000	196,000	2	6,533	20,533	
Phone Follow Up	196,000	1.00	117,600	117,600	10	19,600	78,400	78,400	2	2,613	22,213	
Total	500,000		402,000	402,000		73,700	98,000			23,100	96,800	

- 13. Provide estimates of the total annual cost burden to respondents or record keepers resulting from the collection of information, (do not include the cost of any hour burden shown in items 12 and 14). The cost estimates should be split into two components: (a) a total capital and start-up cost component annualized over its expected useful life; and (b) a total operation and maintenance and purchase of services component.**

There are no capital/start-up or ongoing operation/maintenance costs associated with this information collection.

- 14. Provide estimates of annualized cost to the Federal government; provide a description of the method used to estimate cost which should include quantification of hours, operational expenses, and any other expense that would not have been incurred without this collection of information.**

The total annual cost to the Federal government for the data collection and summarization associated with the List Sampling Frame, criteria questionnaire is \$7.5 million. This is a reduction of \$2 million dollars from the previous approval. NASS has been able to achieve this through improvements made in the 2007 Census of Agriculture survey (0535-0226) and data captured from it to update our list frame control data. Also, additional reductions in expenses have been achieved through the increased usage of a second mail request before beginning phone follow-up.

- 15. Explain the reasons for any program changes or adjustments reported in Items 13 or 14 of the OMB Form 83-I (reasons for changes in burden).**

The estimated burden of 96,800 hours is a little more than one and three quarters as much as the current inventory of 55,000 hours due to increased efforts to improve response rates (two mailings followed up by a phone call for non-respondents) along with the increase in minutes per questionnaire from 10 minutes to 15 minutes for the more detailed criteria questionnaire.

- 16. For collections of information whose results will be published, outline plans for tabulation and publication. Address any complex analytical techniques that will be used. Provide the time schedule for the entire project, including beginning and ending dates of the collection of information, completion of report, publication dates, and other actions.**

Previously, criteria surveys were conducted throughout the year as States discovered potential new farms that could be added to their list frames using outside sources. Now the shorter standard NCS is the primary survey and is conducted once or twice a year and States are encouraged to limit the use of the longer LFCS. Both the NCS and LFCS utilize NASS mail centers, and NASS

phone centers. There is neither a summarization nor a publication resulting from List Sampling Frame Surveys. Data obtained on the criteria questionnaires are used by each Field Office to remove duplication and add control data for list frame sample units. This results in a more efficient sampling frame.

- 17. If seeking approval to not display the expiration date for OMB approval of the information collection, explain the reasons that display would be inappropriate.**

There is no request for approval of non-display of the expiration date.

- 18. Explain each exception to the certification statement identified in Item 19, "Certification for Paperwork Reduction Act Submissions" of OMB Form 83-I.**

There are no exceptions to the certification statement.

June, 2009